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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9533
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 9426
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 8911
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 1906
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 2869
RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 0447
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC 8407
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000009

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AIAG AMBASSADOR LANGE
DEPT FOR OES/IHA SINGER AND FENDRICK
DEPT FOR EAP/J
USDA PASS TO APHIS
HHS PASS TO CDC
HHS FOR OGHA STEIGER, BHAT AND ELVANDER
DEPT PASS TO AID/GH/HIDN DENNIS CARROLL

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [KSTH](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: HHS DEPUTY SECRETARY AZAR'S MEETING WITH PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARY TATSUYA TANIMOTO ON DECEMBER 6

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¶1. (U) Summary: On December 6, Department of Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary Alex M. Azar II met in Tokyo with Tatsuya Tanimoto, Cabinet Office Parliamentary Secretary for Food Safety. They discussed a range of food safety and health issues, including ongoing risk assessments, efforts to protect the food supply, and health innovation. End summary.

BSE Feed Ban Issue

¶2. (SBU) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Deputy Secretary Alex M. Azar II and Parliamentary Secretary for Food

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Safety Tatsuya Tanimoto began their December 6 discussion with an update on agricultural import issues and the ongoing U.S. regulatory processes to prevent the introduction of BSE into the United States.

D/S Azar thanked Tanimoto for Japan's reopening of its market to U.S. beef trade, and informed him that a final regulation was forthcoming from the HHS Food and Drug Administration (FDA) by December 2006 on the use of animal parts in medical products. D/S Azar noted that the USG has banned animal products in ruminant feed for the past eight years, and is assessing the implications of extending the ban to all animal feed. He added that a final HHS/FDA regulation on specified risk material in animal feed is likely in 2007, but emphasized that under U.S. law regulation on such matters must be evidence-based and cost-justified. He offered to keep Japan's Food Safety Commission (FSC) informed during this process. Tanimoto thanked D/S Azar for the update on progress on the feed ban issue, and noted that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, and Fisheries (MAFF) has requested the USG to extend the ban to non-ruminant feed. He added that mutual trust is essential in our shared food safety issues, and that the U.S. and Japan should be open to a regular exchange of information on the subject.

Food Products Derived from Offspring of Cloned Animals

13. (SBU) D/S Azar continued with an update on the ongoing HHS/FDA risk assessment of food products derived from the offspring of cloned animals. He noted that, although HHS/FDA had not released an official assessment, USG scientists believe that there is no difference between the safety of such products and those derived from animals bred in other ways. He added that the official conclusion at the end of the review process is likely to reflect this position. Tanimoto responded that while Japan's FSC has not conducted a risk assessment of such products, he presumed that scientific results would not indicate any additional risks. However, he said that the psychological and emotional issues that surround cloning would likely be a factor in public acceptance. He expressed interest in learning about USG-sponsored research results and U.S. public opinion polling on the matter, and noted that the discussion of the FDA risk assessment would prompt the Japanese government to examine the issue. D/S Azar acknowledged the emotional factor associated with cloning and noted that, while he was unaware of any official polling on the subject, industry lobbies had conducted polls, the results of which, however, seemed to reflect their own particular biases.

Food Defense vs. Food Security: Differing Priorities

14. (SBU) Raising the issue of food defense, D/S Azar noted that the USG places high priority on addressing the vulnerabilities of the American food supply to a terrorist attack. Interestingly, Tanimoto's response to D/S Azar's comment focused on Japan's concern with foQ self-sufficiency, rather than on the risk of the domestic food supply to an attack. Tanimoto noted Japan's dependence on regular food imports, especially from the U.S., and highlighted the threat to Japan's security of an interruption of food supplies. Tanimoto noted that Japan had studied USG and industry efforts on port security and cargo traceability, and said that such initiatives were necessary in Japan to handle imports more effectively. (Comment: While semantic differences in the interpretation might have influenced Tanimoto's response, his comments imply that Japan is less concerned about the defense of its domestic food supply than on the secondary effects on its food imports of an attack elsewhere. End comment.)

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Innovation

15. (SBU) Turning to the subject of innovation, D/S Azar noted the importance of rewarding medical innovation in the health systems of developed countries such as the U.S. and Japan. He added that, as an innovation leader, Japan should consider the impact of innovation in its ongoing health reform efforts. Tanimoto responded that innovation is very important to Prime Minister Abe, who has announced the "Innovation 25" initiative to maintain Japan's economic leadership in the future. He noted that discussions are underway within the Japanese government to determine the priorities of this effort, but that pharmaceutical and medical devices will certainly be included in the initiative.

16. (U) This message has been cleared by HHS.

DONOVAN